

SODIUM TRIPOLYPHOSPHATE AND OVER-GLAZING

Make an informed choice about frozen fish.

Seafood producers use food grade phosphates and a water glaze to preserve their frozen products. Used in trace amounts, the phosphates preserve moisture in the seafood, and the water glaze protects the product from the outside air.

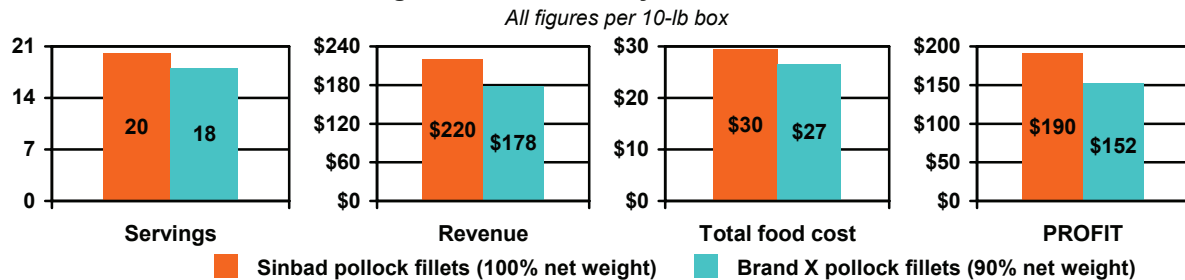
One popular phosphate preservative is sodium tripolyphosphate (STPP). Every country has its own standards for acceptable levels of phosphates in food. For example the FDA states that STPP “is generally recognized as safe when used in accordance with good manufacturing practice.”

In recent years many seafood producers have increased their use of STPP beyond acceptable limits to maximize water absorption in the cells of the meat and thereby boost profits at the expense of their customers.

What are the consequences of over-treated or over-glazed fish?

- **Short weight.** Some producers sell seafood with 10-30% glaze as 95-100% net weight. The surplus glaze is not shed until the seafood is thawed or cooked. End consumers lose much of what they paid for in water loss.
- **Poor quality.** Excessive use of STPP can also harm the eating quality of seafood. It can result in soapy moisture loss during cooking, a dry, crumbly texture, and a heavy soap or phosphorus flavor. Food services operators risk quality losses.

How does over-treated or over-glazed fish affect my bottom line?



Per 10-lb box, Serving size = 8oz, Plate price = \$10.99, % quality rejects = 10%, Other food cost = \$1.00/plate

- The preceding charts compare a restaurant’s profit breakdown per 10-pound box of a) Tradex’s Sinbad brand 100% net weight pollock fillets and b) Brand X 90% net weight pollock fillets.
- Due to higher net weight and superior quality, gross profit for the Sinbad box is \$190.30 compared to \$151.54 for the Brand X box, despite the higher price per box.
- In addition to the lower gross profit on this box, the restaurant has also lost future business from two customers (10%) who rejected their meals due to STPP-related quality issues as described above.

How to avoid over-treated or over-glazed frozen fish?

- Find a supplier that consistently delivers quality product. Quality product generally costs more, but the value is realized with full-weighted, delicious seafood.
- “Too good to be true” prices often identify short-weighted product.
- Weigh the frozen fish with glaze. Remove the glaze with a gentle spray of cold water, agitating carefully. Drain the (still frozen) fish for 2 minutes. Weigh the deglazed frozen fish: this is net weight. The difference between the glazed weight and the net weight is the glaze content.
- Submit a sample to a lab to test phosphate levels.